# 2012-13 Annual Report

Alberta Government

## Vision

To increase the recognition of seniors as one of Alberta's most respected and valuable resources.

## Mission

Consult with seniors, seniors' organizations and others to gather information and provide advice to the government regarding seniors needs.

## Values

Integrity, accountability and respect; through these, Council strives to enable Alberta seniors to maintain their dignity and quality of life.

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## Message from the Chair

As the Chair of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta, I have been truly inspired by the expertise, insight and passion that members of the Council bring to their work. I commend them for their dedication to making Alberta a better place for seniors.

The Council is a vital voice for seniors in Alberta, engaging directly with seniors and seniors' organizations in their communities, providing a critical link between seniors and the government of Alberta. This grassroots engagement helps ensure that government is well informed about the concerns and priorities of seniors.

In addition to informing government policies and initiatives this past year, and providing advice to government, the Council enhanced their knowledge and understanding of government services and programs. During Council meetings government staff presented information on new initiatives that were being considered, clarified information about existing programs and assisted with research and information gathering.

Together with presentations from key stakeholder organizations, and attendance at conferences and workshops, the Council strengthened their knowledge of seniors' issues and aging. These efforts will enhance the Council's voice and effectiveness as it works to improve the quality of life for seniors.

I want to thank the members of the Council for their hard work and inspiring optimism this past year and I look forward to working together with members to enhance the quality of life for Alberta seniors. Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge and thank Mrs. Laurie Lyckman and Mrs. Diana Anderson, who retired from the Council during this past year; and Mr. Simon Lee, who also departed from the Council in 2012.

I also want to thank the staff of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta, and Department of Health staff for their continued assistance and support.

Alana DeLong
MLA, Calgary-Bow
Chair

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## Mandate of the Council

Seniors enrich our society with their knowledge, wisdom and experience, and are vital members of our communities. As a growing part of our population, seniors have unique needs that require attention. By addressing these needs we can help ensure that, as they age, seniors in Alberta will have the opportunity for healthy and fulfilling lives.

The Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta (the "Council") recognizes the importance of seniors in Alberta and works to maintain and improve their quality of life.

Established under the *Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta Act*, the purposes of the Council are:[1]

(a) to advise, report to and make recommendations to the Government on matters relating to senior citizens in Alberta, their well-being and their opportunities for full and equal participation in the life of the Province;

(b) to encourage public discussion and consultation on matters relating to senior citizens;

(c) to review, analyze, consult and make recommendations to the Government respecting

  (i) legislation and policies affecting senior citizens, and

  (ii) the funding and co-ordination of programs and services relating to senior citizens;

(d) to make recommendations to the Government on grants;

(e) to undertake additional activities at the request of the Minister.

The Council serves as a link between senior citizens and stakeholder organizations to the Government of Alberta. Reporting to the Minister of Health[2], the Council gathers views and concerns from seniors, seniors' organizations and senior serving stakeholders through direct communication and engagement.

Suggestions and feedback are gathered by the Council and used to develop advice and recommendations on policies, program needs and services for seniors. At times the Council may undertake further study and research of particular issues with assistance from universities to ensure its advice is evidence-based. Once formulated, advice from the Council is provided directly to the Government of Alberta, through the Minister of Health.

1 *Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta Act*, RSA 2000, c. S-6, s.2(2).

2 Until April 2012, the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta reported through the Minister of Seniors. Effective May 2012, the Council reports through the Minister of Health.



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## Membership, Structure and Recruitment

Under the *Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta Act*, members are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council for a term up to three-years, with an option for re-appointment to a maximum of six consecutive years.

The Council can consist of up to 20 members and at least one member of the Council is appointed from each of the following:

1) the Members of the Legislative Assembly;
2) the Alberta Medical Association;
3) a university as defined in the *Post-secondary Learning Act*.

Members of the public apply to be members of the Council through an open application process managed by the Government of Alberta. Applicants are screened to ensure they possess an appropriate level of knowledge, skills and experience to assist the Council in achieving its objectives and carry out its role in the community.

Council members are community leaders coming from a wide variety of backgrounds. Collectively their knowledge and expertise is integral to the work the Council does to better enhance the quality of life for seniors and families.

**Council Membership for the Fiscal Year April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013**

| | |
|---|---|
| Ms. Alana DeLong | MLA for Calgary-Bow, Chair |
| Dr. Al Cook | Alberta's Universities |
| Dr. John Guy Gokiert | Alberta Medical Association |
| Mr. Vincent Leung | Calgary and Area Region |
| Mrs. Linda Scheibner | Calgary and Area Region |
| Mrs. Margaret Usherwood | Calgary and Area Region |
| Mr. Simon Lee | Calgary and Area Region (resigned Nov. 2012) |
| Mrs. Beverly Homeniuk | Edmonton and Area Region |
| Mrs. Laurie Morris | Edmonton and Area Region |
| Ms. Rosemarie Biggs | Edmonton and Area Region |
| Mrs. Diana Anderson | North East Region (term expired Sept. 11, 2012) |
| Mrs. Sally Heinen | North West Region |
| Ms. Jane Manning | North West Region |
| Mrs. Laurie Lyckman | South Region (term expired Aug. 31, 2012) |

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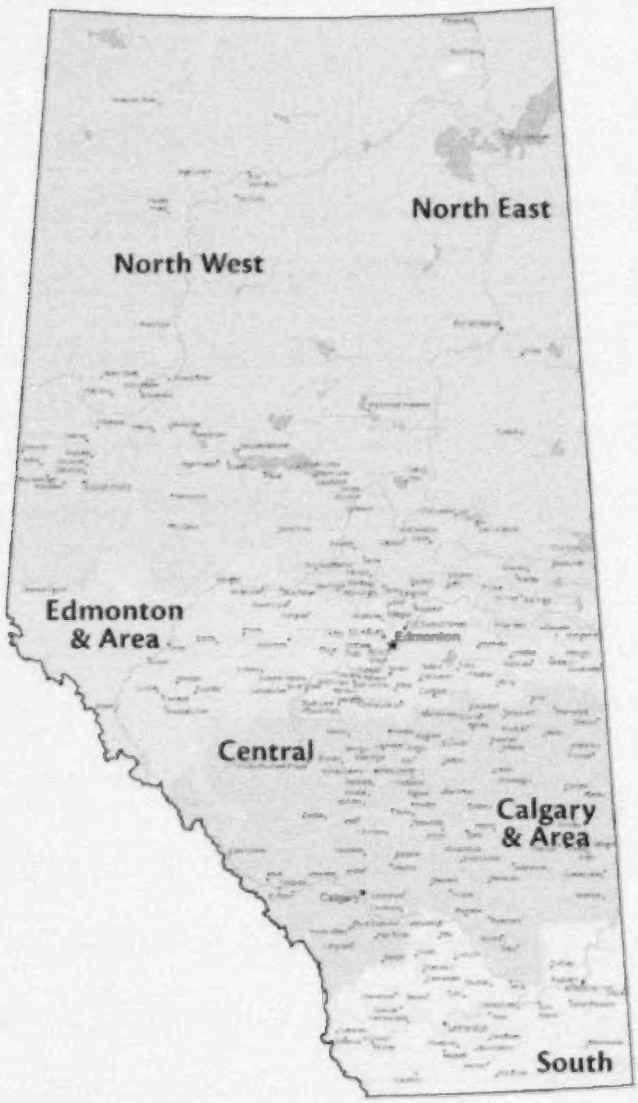
## Giving Voice to Regional Issues

Members are appointed to represent one of six geographic regions in the province, which gives Albertans the opportunity to provide input to Council on issues that are relative to their particular local and regional area. It also ensures members of the Council remain close to the communities they represent, enabling them to stay in touch with seniors about on-going and emerging issues that affect their lives.





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## Council Committees

To support its mandate, the Council has established a number of committees to focus on key issues that impact seniors' lives. At each quarterly meeting, committees share their findings and propose recommendations for discussion and consideration by the full Council. Often these are aimed at enhancing existing government policies and programs for seniors, or introducing or exploring new programs that could benefit seniors living in Alberta.

Based on these recommendations and discussions, the Council develops its advice and forwards that advice to the Government of Alberta through the Minister of Health. Presently, the Council has six working committees:

**Accommodations Committee** – Reviews and develops policy recommendations related to seniors accommodation. With a view to related programs and services that are already available, the committee determines where service gaps may exist and determines ways to address identified accommodation issues.

**Communications Committee** – Reviews existing communication methods and materials to help ensure seniors receive effective and relevant information regarding benefit programs and services.

**Education and Research Committee** – Collaborates with Alberta's post-secondary institutions to share knowledge, expertise and research on issues that affect our aging population.

**Elder Abuse/Diversity Committee** – Looks at community and government initiatives to reduce and address elder abuse, and considers ways to ensure ethnic or culturally diverse seniors have information about these issues. The committee also evaluates existing programs to help ensure they are meeting the needs of seniors and provides recommendations for improvement.

**Health and Wellness Committee** – Examines government health-related programs and services, identifies health service issues and gaps, and proposes solutions that will help enhance the wellness of seniors.

**Transportation Committee** – Determines what transportation services are available for seniors and makes recommendations that will improve the availability of safe and affordable transportation for seniors.

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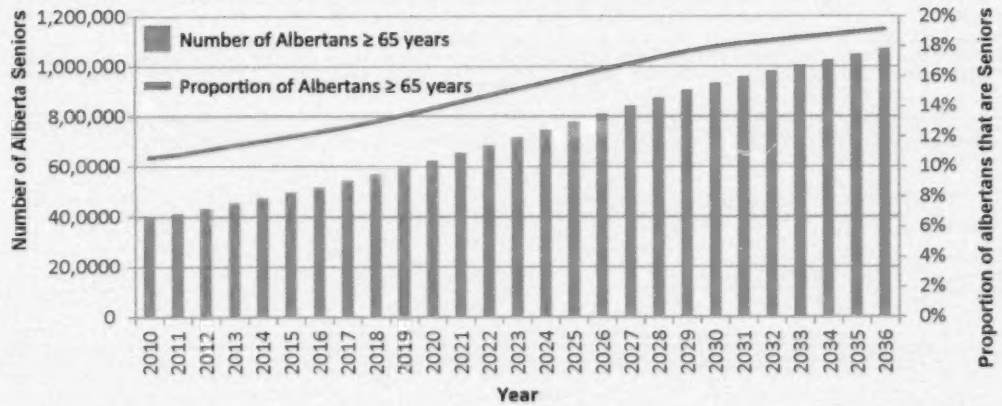
## Setting the Context

The Council undertakes its work against the backdrop of a demographically evolving Alberta, in which the number of seniors will increase in the coming years. With an aging population comes changing needs of older members of the population and new opportunities to further engage and enhance the lives of seniors. As it fulfills its mission, the Council takes note of trends relevant to seniors in Alberta.

### The Number of Seniors Continues to Grow

Like many other western societies, Alberta has an aging population. Among other things, this is due to decreasing fertility rates, increasing life expectancy and the aging of the baby boom generation. The number of seniors in Alberta (aged 65 and older) has increased steadily over the past 35 years and will continue to increase in the future. As of March 2013, there were approximately 450,000 seniors in our province[3]. By 2030, the baby boomer generation will finish turning 65 and by then, it is estimated that more than one in six Albertans will be a senior.

**Populaton Projection: Alberta Seniors (2010-2036)**




Source: Statistics Canada. 2010, May 25. Table 052-0005 - Projected population, by projection scenario, sex and age group as of July 1, Canada, provinces and territories, annual, CANSIM (database).

3 Source: Alberta Health Administrative Data



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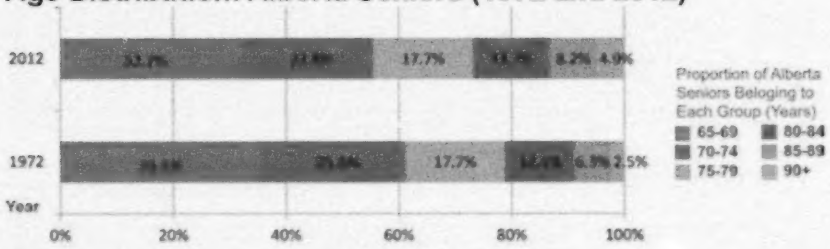
## Alberta's Population Remains Relatively Young

Although our society is aging overall, Alberta's population is young relative to the national population. In 2011, at 11.1%, Alberta had the lowest proportion of seniors (65 years or more) among all the provinces, and also the lowest proportion (3.0%) of older seniors (80 years or more). At the national level these figures were 14.8% and 4.0%, respectively.

**Age Distribution: Alberta Seniors (1972 and 2012)**

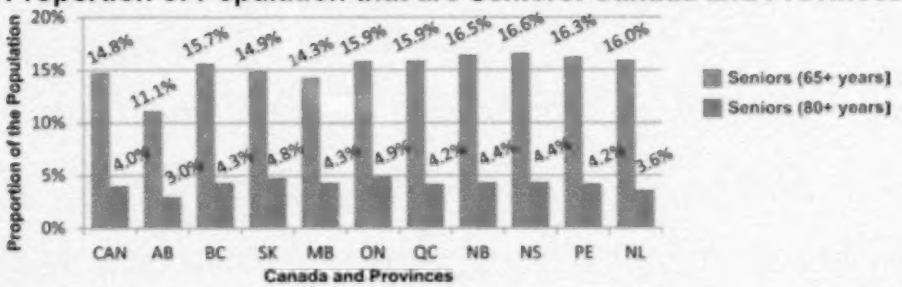



Source: Statistics Canada. 2012, September 26. Table 051-0001 – Estimates of population, by age group and sex for July 1, Canada, provinces and territories, annual, CANSIM (database).

## Most Seniors Live in their own Homes

Home ownership is strong among seniors in Alberta. In 2006, approximately 71% owned their own homes and 20% had a mortgage, compared to 62% of all Alberta homeowners. In 2011, about 4.8% of Alberta seniors lived in a nursing home, chronic care or long-term care hospital, and another 4.0% lived in a residence for seniors[4].

**Proportion of Population that are Seniors: Canada and Provinces 2011**




Source: Statistics Canada. 2012, December 15. Population by broad age groups and sex by Statistical Area Classification, 2011, Canada, provinces and territories. 2011 Census.

4 Source: Statistics Canada 2013. February 27. *Definitions for Residences for seniors, defined in 2011 Census re: Collective Dwellings, refers to those that provide support services (such as meals, housekeeping, medication, supervision, assistance in bathing) and supervision for elderly residents who are independent in most activities of daily living.*

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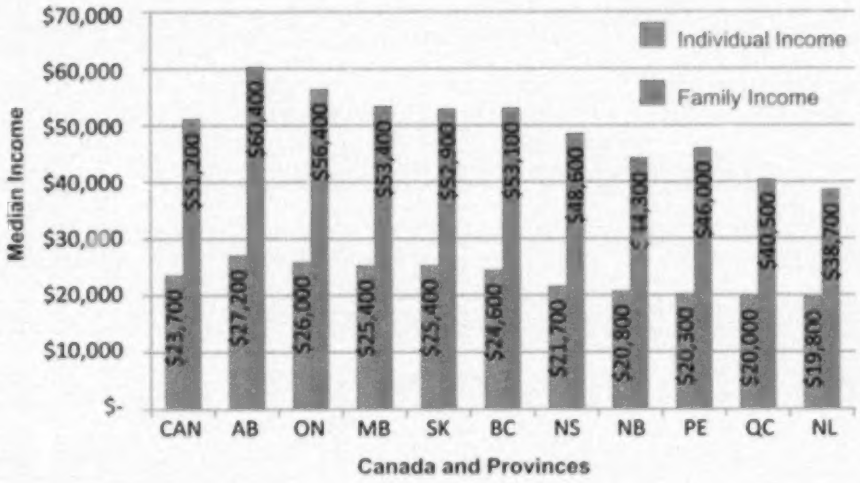
## Average Income on the Rise

In 2011, Alberta individual seniors had the highest median individual income of all the provinces ($27,200); nationally, this figure was $23,700.

**Seniors' Median Income: Canada and Provinces 2011**




Sources:
Statistics Canada. 2013, June 27. Table 202-0407 – Income of individuals, by sex, age group, and income source, 2011 constant dollars, Canada, provinces and territories, annual. CANSIM (database).
Statistics Canada. 2013, June 27. Table 202-0409 – Average total income, by census family type and living arrangement, 2011 constant dollars, Canada, provinces, and territories, annual. CANSIM (database).

Similarly, Alberta senior couples had the highest median income of all the provinces ($60,400); nationally, the median was $51,200.

Seniors in Alberta receive their income from various sources. In 2011, the largest sources of Alberta seniors' income were: retirement income such as employer pension plans and Registered Retirement Income Funds (28.9%); Old Age Security (17.3%), Canada/Quebec Pension Plan (17.1%), and wages, salaries, and commissions 14.2%)[5].

5 Statistics Canada. 2013, June 27. Table 202-0407 – Income of individuals, by sex, age group, and income source, Canada, provinces and territories, annual. CANSIM (database).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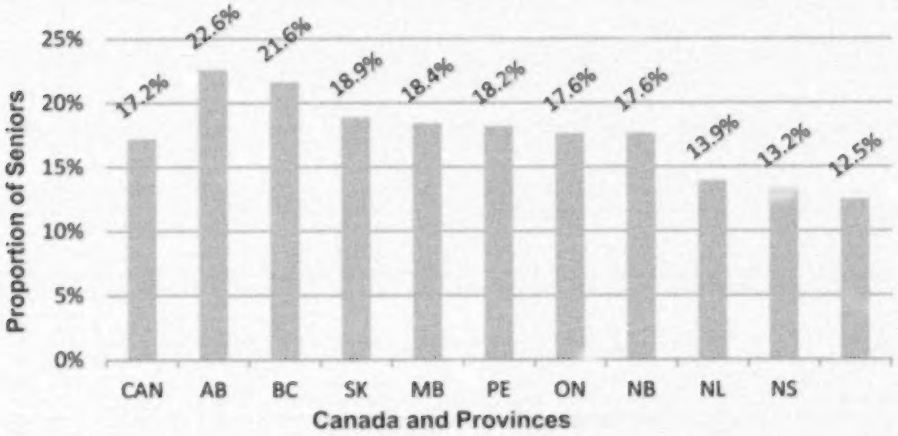
## Seniors are Working Past the Age of 65

Workforce participation by seniors in Alberta is high. In 2011, Alberta recorded the highest proportion of seniors reporting employment income (22.6%) relative to the other provinces; the national average was 17.2%.

**Proportion of Seniors Reporting Wages, Salaries or Commissions: Canada and the Provinces, 2011**




Source: Statistics Canada. 2013, June 27. Table 202-0407 – Income of individuals, by sex, age group, and income source, 2011 constant dollars, Canada, provinces and territories, annual. CANSIM (database).

Despite the smaller proportion of seniors in Alberta, workers aged 65 and older accounted for 3.5% of Alberta's employed workforce, compared to 3.3% nationally (2012)[6].

6 Source: Statistics Canada. 2013, January 3. Table 282-0002 - Labour force survey estimates (LFS), by sex and detailed age group, Canada, provinces and territories, annual. CANSIM (database).

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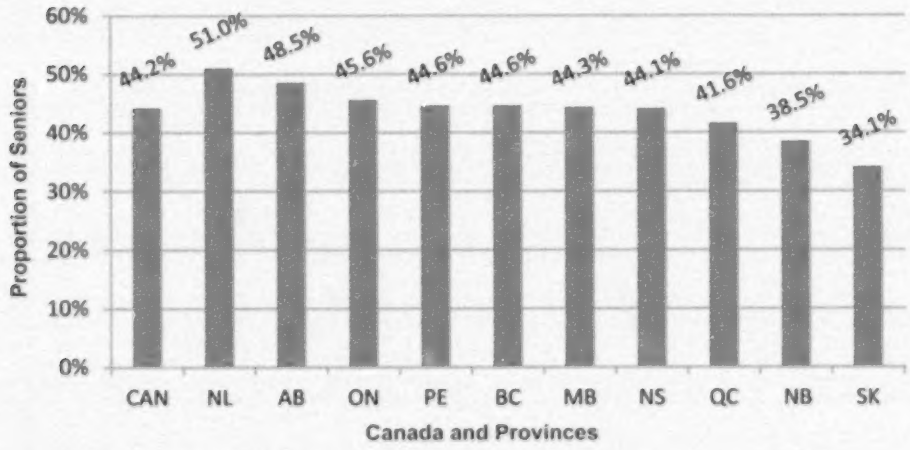
## Alberta Seniors Share Healthy Behaviours

New data from the Canadian Community Health Survey provide interesting information on the health and health related behaviours of the Alberta senior population:

- In 2012, 94.6% of Alberta seniors reported having a regular medical doctor.
- The proportion of Alberta seniors reporting that their health is either very good or excellent has increased almost 25% since 2003 - rising to 48.5% in 2012. This was the second highest proportion of seniors reporting either very good or excellent health, compared to the other provinces.
- Nearly 70% of Alberta seniors reported very good or excellent mental health, in 2012.
- Almost half of Alberta seniors (47.1%) reported being physically active, but about 60% reported they were overweight or obese (2012).

Also in 2012, just 7.8% of Alberta seniors reported being either an occasional or daily smoker, compared to 21.6% of the Alberta population (12 years of age or more). Among all of the provinces, this was the second lowest proportion of seniors reporting occasional or daily smoking.

**Proportion of Seniors Reporting Very Good or Excellent Health: Canada and the Provinces, 2012**




Source: Statistics Canada. 2013, June 17. Table 105-0501 – Health indicator profile, annual estimates, by age group and sex, Canada, provinces, territories, health regions, and peer groups, occasional. CANSIM (database).Key Activities of the Council, 2012-2013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## Enhancing Council Expertise

When speaking with seniors and their family members, Council members are often asked for information or assistance with specific issues. For Council members to be able to respond it is imperative they have a good knowledge and understanding of government programs and services that affect seniors, and know where to make appropriate referrals.

This is accomplished in several ways. At its quarterly meetings, the Council receives updates from Alberta Health staff regarding changes to existing programs, and Council may be asked to provide input into new programs for seniors. In addition, the Council meets with seniors' stakeholder organizations to listen and discuss issues that are important to seniors. By connecting with regional program staff located at Seniors Information Services Offices across the province, Council members also keep abreast of new initiatives and hear from seniors in their region.

## Quarterly Council Meeting Presentations

To enhance Council's expertise, a number of presentations were provided to the Council during 2012-2013:

**Social Policy Framework** - The framework was designed with input from Albertans. It reflects a clear vision for our province's future, identifies outcomes and strategies to achieve them, and guides how Albertans will work together to achieve the results Albertans expect. Over 31,000 people provided input through conversations in communities and online to help create the Framework. A presentation about the Government of Alberta's progress and approach in developing a new Social Policy Framework for Alberta can be found at: http://www.socialpolicy.alberta.ca/.

**Elder Abuse Prevention Training Approach** - Council members were given an overview of the workshops and training sessions being offered throughout Alberta.

**Health Quality Council of Alberta** - Information was presented about the work of the Health Quality Council of Alberta and the Medication Management Checklist tool it developed to help improve the the processes associated with safe medication management and patient care.

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## Networking with Stakeholders

The Council looks for opportunities to meet with key stakeholder organizations that undertake important work to enhance the quality of life for seniors in Alberta. These meetings provide opportunities to exchange information and ideas. They also enable Council members to develop a stronger understanding of stakeholder involvement and viewpoints on important public policy issues. During 2012-2013, the Council met with the following organizations:

- Alberta Association of Gerontology
- Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities
- Seniors Action and Liaison Team
- Seniors United Now
- Calgary Family Services
- Third Age Commons – The Way In-Calgary Older Adult Services
- Health Advisory Council
- Northern Alberta Development Council – Developing Transportation Strategies for Seniors

## Conferences and Education Sessions

During 2012-2013, a number of Council members attended conferences and educational sessions on key issues relevant to seniors to further enhance their knowledge and understanding of initiatives that affect seniors.

- *Seniors Education Conference* – Vermilion
- *Global Perspectives on Assessing Older Drivers* – Science Informing Public Policy – University of Calgary, Alberta Motor Association
- *Family and Community Support Services Educational Forum for Seniors* – St. Paul
- *Alberta Addictions and Mental Health Research Partnership Program and the Alberta Addiction and Mental Health Strategy* (Alberta Health) – Alberta Health Services - The Council received information about the Partnership's Collaborative Research Grant Initiative, which provides research into specific areas to increase relevant and practical knowledge, to improve the mental health of Albertans.


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- *Age-Friendly Communities Information Workshops* - Held in locations across Alberta, these workshops provided tools and resources to community leaders interested in pursuing initiatives to improve the age-friendliness of their communities.
- *Grey Matters Conference* – Edmonton – Members of the Council attended this annual two day conference in September 2012. The conference provided delegates with opportunities to learn more about programs, services and issues that are important to seniors in Alberta.
- *Suicide in the Elderly* – Alberta Health Services
- *Immigration and Challenges to Accessing Seniors Benefits*, Nord-Bridge Seniors Centre, Lethbridge
- *Palliative Care Conference*, Grande Prairie

## Seniors' Week Celebrations

Each year the Government of Alberta declares the first full week in June as Seniors' Week to celebrate the lives and contributions of seniors in Alberta. The Council plays an important role in this event by attending as many events as possible to connect with seniors, enabling them to listen to seniors' issues in more informal settings.

Sixty-eight municipalities joined the government in proclaiming Seniors' Week for June 4-10, 2012. Organizations across the province registered their events on the Council's web page to publicize events to media and community members.

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## Connecting with Seniors

One of the key commitments of Council members is to stay informed on current and potential trends, challenges and innovations in policies, programs and services that impact seniors. To do this, Council members look for opportunities to connect with seniors in their communities.

In May, Council members visited with seniors in seven seniors residences and two seniors centers, located in the communities of Leduc and Beaumont. Information was gathered to help inform the on-going work of the Council.

The Council believes in being an active voice and presence in their communities. Over the past year, Council members participated in many meetings, consultations and events, reaching out to seniors and seniors' organizations in the communities they represent. These included:

- Grande Spirit Foundation, Wildrose Manor and James Manor, Grande Prairie
- Seniors Outreach Centre, Grande Prairie
- Grande Prairie Legion
- Cleardale Community Enhancement Society, Clear Hills County
- Carewest, Calgary
- Wing Kei Care Centre, Calgary
- Nord-Bridge Seniors Centre, Lethbridge
- Little Bow Continuing Care, Calgary
- Pioneer Circle, Seniors Forum, Elk Point
- Pioneer House, Fort Saskatchewan
- Vegreville Manor, Vegreville
- Seniors Information Fair, Peace River
- Garneau Hall, Edmonton
- West End Seniors Activity Centre, Edmonton



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### Informing Government

The Council has a good working relationship with Alberta's Ministry of Health. Council members are often asked by the government for feedback on prospective policies that impact the lives of seniors and families. During 2012-2013, the Council helped inform a number of government policies, actions and initiatives, including:

- Input on resource materials to inform Albertans about aging and driver safety;
- The continued implementation of policies, programs and services guided by the *Aging Population Policy Framework*; and
- Input on resource materials to support Age-Friendly Community Information Workshops and the development of age-friendly communities generally.

## Issues

Through its ongoing interactions with seniors, the Council heard concerns and perspectives on a variety of topics. Among these, several issues are recurring or are particularly significant for seniors' quality of life in Alberta. The Council feels it is worthwhile to bring the government attention to these key issues, to help inform government policy and program choices.

### Lack of Available Transportation

Transportation continues to be a challenge for seniors living in communities across Alberta, especially rural and remote communities. Most small communities do not have a population sufficient to sustain a public transit system, and many communities have few transportation options for seniors who are unable to drive. Where options do exist, seniors often find them unaffordable and difficult to get in and out of, due to functional limitations and the types of vehicles used.

Transportation is very important for ensuring seniors can stay independent and connected to their community resources. Having more transportation options available would enable seniors to get to/from appointments and shopping, maintain social interactions with others and give them more opportunities to sustain healthy lifestyles. It is apparent that the need for age-friendly transportation options is needed throughout Alberta.

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## Affordable Accommodation

Housing is a basic need of individuals and has an important relationship to health. Unfortunately, an increasing number of seniors are concerned about their inability to afford appropriate housing. As our province's population and economy have expanded, the cost of accommodation has increased in many communities and affordable accommodation options have narrowed.

The private, not for profit and public sectors all have important roles to play in the community to ensure seniors have access to safe, affordable and appropriate accommodation.

## Long Term Care

Seniors continue to be concerned about the shortage of long term care accommodation in their community. Although the Government of Alberta is working to add more, it will be a challenge to meet the demand of our increasing number of elderly people. The need for more long term care spaces and more staff is very much a concern for seniors and families living in Alberta.

## Active Living and Preventative Health Promotion

An increasing number of seniors are saying that more effort should be focused on programs that provide information about preventative health. Preventing illness and injury, and ensuring people live a healthy lifestyle, is more cost-effective and more desirable than the high human and financial costs of treating health problems. Seniors want the health system to be there for them if they have a health concern, but they would much rather stay healthy in the first place.

In this context, seniors are taking an increasing interest in active living. Communities need to have options available that will enable seniors to remain healthy and active. Recreation centres and quality programming will become increasingly important to seniors in the coming years.

Many seniors are taking dietary supplements on a regular basis to ensure they maintain their health. While some seniors have these prescribed by their physician, many low income seniors find them difficult to afford. Consequently, seniors often will go without the dietary supplements, compromising their efforts to take preventative health action.


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## Council Advice to the Government of Alberta

Over the past year, the Council has developed advice to the Government of Alberta on issues aimed at enhancing seniors' well-being. This advice is made with the goal of improving seniors' opportunities for full and equal participation in Alberta communities.

### Awareness and Access to Benefit Programs

The Government of Alberta offers a number of benefit programs to eligible seniors to help maintain and enhance their quality of life. However, the Council has heard there is a lack of awareness among many seniors about these programs. In some cases, seniors do not know a program exists. In other cases seniors have difficulty determining whether a program would help them, or if they are eligible.

Seniors benefit programs are extremely important for enhancing seniors' well-being and quality of life. Ensuring seniors have access to the information they need will ensure they receive the benefits they may be eligible for. While many seniors are computer and internet-savvy, not all seniors have the ability or means to access information electronically. Some seniors report they find it challenging and frustrating to find the information they need. Although the government has made a substantial amount of information available on websites, it is sometimes difficult for seniors to navigate through this. People have varying degrees of proficiency with and access to the internet. In some cases, the distribution of brochures and publications are the most accessible and useful options for seniors.

As Alberta grows more diverse, there will be an increasing number of seniors for whom English is not their first language. Varying levels of literacy will continue to be present in the senior population. It will be essential that information is easy to read, in plain language and, where practical, available in languages other than English.

In addition to accessing programs and services from the Government of Alberta, seniors also look for information about federal programs and services. The Council has heard from seniors who find it difficult to locate information about federal programs and services. Issues include: the navigability of information on federal websites, a lack of plain language and being bounced between different ministries and personnel when making an inquiry.

A commitment was made by the Government of Alberta in its *Aging Population Policy Framework* to make government easier to access for seniors. The Council recommends the Government of Alberta encourage the federal government to deliver programs and services in more senior-friendly ways, by making information more accessible to seniors in Alberta.

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## Communication Protocol

Over the past year, Council members encountered considerable worry among seniors and family members about changes made in continuing care. In particular, seniors expressed concerns about the decision-making process when it comes to the continued operation of long term care facilities, or changes to capacity in continuing care generally. The Council found that many of these concerns stemmed from a lack of information given to residents and their families.

Continuing care is a sensitive area that goes to the heart of seniors' shelter, health and well-being. As such, continuing care residents and their families should have regular, current and reliable communication about matters regarding their care. The Government of Alberta needs to be more open with residents, families and staff about anything to do with a care facility, including the rationale behind facility changes or closures. The Council also encourages the Government of Alberta and Alberta Health Services to work collaboratively in the area of continuing care for the betterment of all residents.

## Mental Health Services for Seniors

As Alberta's population grows, it is anticipated the number of Albertans having a mental illness will also increase, including seniors. Seniors have expressed concern that the availability of mental health services does not meet current levels of demand. Access to these services is also inequitable across the province. Residents of some communities have local access to mental health services, while residents of other communities must travel great distances to access them.

The Government of Alberta needs to ensure there are mental health resources in place, including trained professionals and mental health day programs, to adequately meet today's needs and the future needs of our growing and aging population. The Council is interested in working with staff to ensure senior-specific mental health needs are addressed in *Alberta's Addiction and Mental Health Strategy*.


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### Shingles Vaccine

Shingles is becoming more of a health issue among the aging population as it is more prevalent among older adults. A vaccine for shingles is available and some physicians recommend vaccinations of adults upon reaching a certain age.

At present, the shingles vaccine is not covered by Government of Alberta vaccine schedule. This puts it out of reach for many low-income seniors. Treating shingles can require hospitalization, resulting in high costs to Alberta's health system. The Council advises the Government of Alberta to place the shingles vaccine on the Alberta Blue Cross Drug Benefit List, thereby enabling seniors to afford the vaccine and engage in preventive health.

## Closing Remarks

The Council wishes to thank all of the individuals and organizations who have informed its work and deliberations over the past year. The Council also expresses its heartfelt appreciation for the hospitality shown by communities and organizations in welcoming Council members.

Through its work, the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta strives to serve as a unique, effective and meaningful voice — for seniors and by seniors. The valuable insight, perspectives and lives of Alberta seniors is a continuing source of inspiration for Council members as they work to improve the lives of seniors in Alberta.

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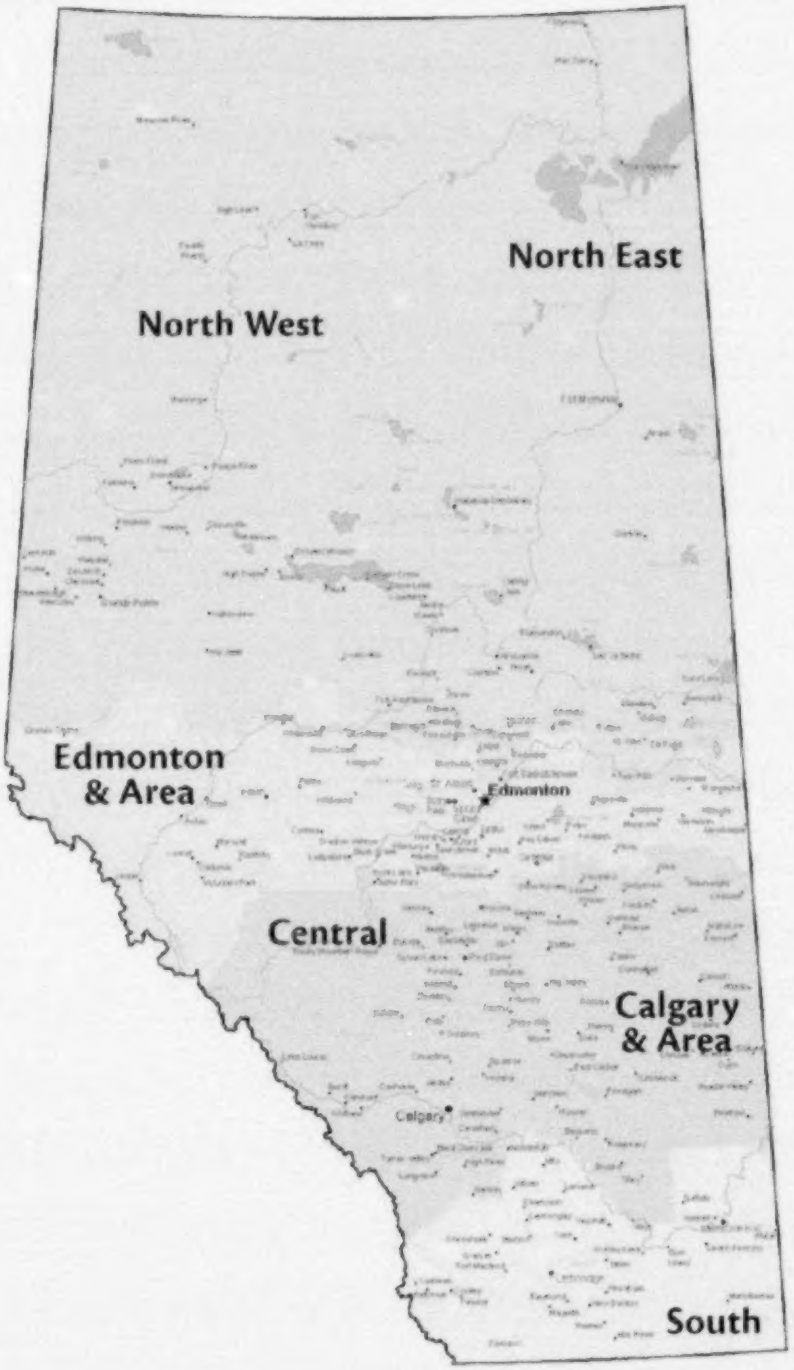
## Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta - Council Members



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## Biographies - Council Members

**Alana DeLong**
Chair, Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta and MLA, Calgary-Bow

Alana DeLong was elected to her fourth term on April 23, 2012, as a Member of the Legislative Assembly representing the Constituency of Calgary Bow.

Ms. DeLong is a member of the Legislative Offices Committee, the Standing Committee on Private Bills and the Standing Committee on Families and Communities. Ms. DeLong Chairs the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta and Alberta's Delegation of the Pacific North West Economic Region (PNWER). In 2010 she co-chaired the PNWER Calgary Summit Host Committee.

Born in Nelson, British Columbia, Ms. Alana DeLong obtained her Bachelor of Science (Honours) in mathematics with a minor in theatre from the University of British Columbia. She then moved to Calgary, where she attended courses at the University of Calgary, Master's in Computer Science Program.

Ms. DeLong has more than 20 years of experience in the field of information technology and has worked for many leading high-tech computer firms in Calgary, serving as President of Sterlingrock Systems Incorporated. Alana was also the first female computer mainframe salesman with Sperry Univac. She was also the first female marketing manager with Canadian General Electric. An active member of her community, some of Ms. DeLong's past contributions have been as President of Tuesday Nooners Toastmasters and as a singer with the Calgary Opera Chorus. She has campaigned extensively for the Red Cross Society, the Cancer Fund, the Heart and Stroke Fund, Flowers of Hope, and various municipal, national and provincial elections. She hosted a TV ski program and has been an actress with Theatre Calgary.

For more than 30 years Ms. DeLong has called Calgary Bow home. Alana enjoys the outdoors and has hiked the province's mountains and canoed most of the rivers in southern Alberta. Alana DeLong has two grown children, Samantha and James.

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**Dr. Al Cook**
Alberta's universities

Dr. Cook specializes in assistive device technology and is currently researching the use of robots to develop and reveal cognitive and language abilities in children who have severe disabilities.

He received his Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering at the University of Colorado and his masters in Bioengineering as well as his doctorate from the University of Wyoming.

In addition to being associated with the Assistive Device Service at the Glenrose Hospital, Dr. Cook has served as Co-Director of the Assistive Device Center at California State University.

Dr. Cook is a Professor in the Department of Speech Pathology and Audiology at the University of Alberta and prior to this was the Dean of Rehabilitation Medicine from 1994-2007. Dr. Cook serves on several committees for Alberta Health & Wellness and the local Capital Health Authority.

Dr. Cook became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2008.

**Dr. John Guy Gokiert**
Alberta Medical Association

Dr. Gokiert was born in southern Manitoba and moved to the Edmonton area with his family where he attended the University of Alberta. After medical school, he moved to Westlock, Alberta with his wife, Susan, where they had three children and where Dr. Gokiert ran a general practice until his retirement in 2009. During his career, Dr. Gokiert worked with the Alberta Medical Association (President in 1994-1995), the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta, the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Medical Protective Association.

Dr. Gokiert has always been interested in all aspects of medicine, particularly the care of the elderly. He was involved as president of the Medical Staff at both the acute care hospital and a long term care facility in Westlock as well as a Medical Examiner for the province. Dr. Gokiert was also a teacher for both Medical Students and Family Medicine residents at the University of Alberta.

Dr. Gokiert became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2010.


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**Rosemarie Biggs**
Edmonton and Area Region

Rosemarie Biggs was a community pharmacist when she started a home visit program for seniors. She used her prescription deliveries as an opportunity to discuss with seniors their medications and how to take them properly.

Her community and professional involvement includes serving as president of the Alberta Pharmaceutical Association in 1996. She was re-elected as the association's president in 1998.

Ms. Biggs has also spoken nationally and internationally, and has received several awards in recognition of her work. The awards include the Canadian Pharmacists' Association's Pharmacist Care of Older Persons Award and the Pride of Strathcona Award for her dedication to patients' well-being.

Ms. Biggs became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2007.

**Beverly Homeniuk**
Edmonton and Area Region

Beverly Homeniuk has served on several boards, committees and organizations at district, regional and provincial levels in the Vegreville region.

She has also been an outreach worker with the Vegreville Health Unit, where she developed and implemented visiting programs for the elderly and homebound. Most recently, she served in an administrative position with the provincial government where a large part of her role involved providing support and assistance to seniors. In 1998, Mrs. Homeniuk was awarded the Northeast 4-H Region Award of Distinction for volunteer leadership, and her family received the Edmonton Northlands/Alberta Motor Association Farm Family Award in 2001.

Mrs. Homeniuk became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2007.

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**Sally Heinen**
North West Region

Sally Heinen is enthusiastic about promoting seniors to be active participants in all aspects of their communities. She has chaired and volunteered on the Community Services Board, which supported a Home Support Program for seniors, enabling them to live in their own homes as long as possible.

Mrs. Heinen's love of children led her to spend the last twenty years in the school system, where she spent many hours volunteering with the students on special projects or with minor sports like hockey. She also chaired and volunteered with many Parent Advisory Councils – sometimes on three at a time.

Mrs. Heinen has developed an immense passion for seniors, mostly from her family members. She grew up watching her grandparents manoeuvre through retirement. And now, her parents are in their eighties and are still working and loving it. All of this has helped Mrs. Heinen to realize her belief that seniors continue to have an important role in our society.

Mrs. Heinen became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2011.

**Vincent Leung**
Calgary and Area Region

Vincent W. Leung is a Chartered Accountant and a passionate leader about seniors care and wellness in his community.

Mr. Leung was instrumental in the founding the Wing Kei Care Centre in Calgary—the first Chinese nursing home to provide culturally and dietary appropriate programming to its residents. Since the beginning of its operations in 2005, the Wing Kei Care Centre has won acclaims in meeting provincial and national standards.

During Mr. Leung's term as a member of the Senate at the University of Calgary, he participated actively with local and international communities.

Mr. Leung was the recipient of the Alberta Centennial Award in 2005 and the International Achievement Award from the University of Calgary in 2006.

Mr. Leung became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2010.


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**Jane Manning**
North West Region

Jane Manning is a Registered Nurse and a board member of the Wapiti Community Dorm Society, which manages the Rotary House Emergency Shelter in Grande Prairie.

Ms. Manning is also a member of the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta Continuing Competence Committee, the Alberta Secretariat for Action on Homelessness, and the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Northwest Region Board.

Until she retired in 2007, Ms. Manning also held the position of Vice-President of Regional Health Services for the Peace Country Health Region.

Ms. Manning became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2011.

**Laurie Morris**
Edmonton and Area Region

Laurie Morris is a clinical social worker employed at the Glenrose Rehabilitation Hospital in Edmonton, and works primarily in the area of geriatrics. She has extensive contact with seniors, their caregivers and families. An area of interest and clinical focus for Laurie is dementia and capacity assessment.

Over the years, Laurie has been involved in a volunteer capacity with her professional association, with community social service agencies/organizations, with school parent advisory councils, and with sports/recreation events and associations.

Laurie became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2009.

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**Linda Scheibner**
Calgary and Area Region

Linda Scheibner hails from Gem and has served the Calgary and Area Region since December 2010. She has a genuine respect and interest in the issues that arise for seniors in the province, and looks forward to being able to provide another voice for the provinces rural and urban senior's populations. Mrs. Scheibner has served on many different boards and committees within the hamlet of Gem and the County of Newell, such as: Gem FCSS, the Gem Library Board, Newell Further Education Council and the Gem Community Association.

Mrs. Scheibner completed a Community and Youth Leadership program at Lethbridge Community College and remains active in her community. She and her husband own and operate a farm and feedlot, where she enjoys the benefits and challenges that are associated with farming and the rural way of life. The family farm has provided for the Scheibners' since 1914 and their 3 sons are now raising the 5th generation of Scheibners' in the community of Gem.

**Margaret Usherwood**
Calgary and Area Region

Margaret Usherwood began her career as a Registered Nurse, specializing in Intensive Care at a major urban hospital. She completed studies in Marketing at Ryerson University in Toronto while working as a clinical researcher in the pharmaceutical industry. Mrs. Usherwood has held the position of Senior Product Manager for medical capital equipment companies, and has also been published in medical journals.

Mrs. Usherwood has a number of years of experience working with seniors in the province, in home care and seniors housing. As a partner in U2 Consulting, she provided market research and consulting for elder service and seniors housing markets. Mrs. Usherwood also has a Gerontology Certificate from the University of Calgary.

Mrs. Usherwood is the Client Service Manager at Carewest, and has volunteered her time on many boards that focus on seniors, including the Seniors Housing Forum and the Alberta Association for Gerontology.

Mrs. Usherwood became a member of the Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta in 2011.


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SENIORS ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR ALBERTA

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